

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

F.W. DE KLERK'S ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT (5/2/91)

The Southern African catholic Bishops' Conference welcomes the announcement by President F W de Klerk that it is the government's intention to repeal the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, and the 'Development of Black Communities' Act during the current parliamentary session. In particular it welcomes Mr de Klerk's indication that the government also intends repealing the Population Registration Act, the cornerstone of all apartheid legislation.

Mr de Klerk is to be congratulated on once again adopting a courageous position with regard to the dismantling of apartheid legislation. The Conference prays that those who still cling to the ideology of apartheid will not deter him.

Mr de Klerk's failure to address the matter of security legislation is a disappointment. The Conference would also have liked Mr de Klerk to have dealt with the release of political prisoners and the return of South African exiles, matters in which progress has been extremely slow. The Conference believes that the best manner in which these two issues can be resolved is through the granting of general amnesty.

There can be no doubt that the present situation has come about through the pressures, both internal and external, that has been exerted on the government over the years. Mr de Klerk's ability to read the signs of the times and to act constructively and courageously on that reading raises the hope that a completely new dispensation for our country is within reach.

Clearly the socio-economic consequences of decades of racial discrimination and impoverishment will require urgent and just as courageous attention if there is to be stability and peace in our land.

Encouraged by the recent meetings of representatives of the ANC and Inkatha and by several instances of joint action within the liberation movement, the Conference prays that negotiations on the future of South Africa will soon proceed in a peaceful and constructive atmosphere.